

Passport Application Collection Centres in Karnataka

4464. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Passport Application Collection Centre has been opened at Gulbarga in Karnataka;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to open such Passport Application Collection Centres at Dharwad, Mysore and other places in the State; and

(c) whether there is any proposal to set up a full-fledged passport office in Gulbarga?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir. Passport Application Collection Centre at Gulbarga has been inaugurated on 1st February, 2001 and it has become functional.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

Issues discussed with Iranian Leaders

4465. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the issues both multilateral and bilateral taken up and discussed with Iranian leaders during the visit of our Prime Minister to Iran;

(b) the details thereof, issue wise;

(c) whether this visit reinvents the old associations with Iran; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b) Prime Minister paid an official visit to Iran, a country with which India shares deep historical ties and civilisational and cultural affinities, from 10—13 April, 2001. During PM's visit both sides discussed issues relating to cooperation on bilateral, regional and international matters. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the

strengthening and deepening of consultations and to enhancing coordination on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual concern.

PM and President Khatami emphasised the need to enhance trade ties, economic and technical cooperation and cultural contacts. They emphasised the need to promote tourism and decided that India would hold an 'India-Week' in Iran and correspondingly Iran would hold an 'Iran Week' in India. Both sides recognised the importance of preservation of peace, security and stability in the region and agreed to enhance mutual cooperation for safeguarding peace and stability in the region which was witnessing the rise of extremist forces, terrorism and enhanced flow of illicit drugs. In their discussion on international matters, the two leaders emphasised equality between nations and governments.

(c) and (d) India and Iran have historical ties of friendship and cooperation and PM's recent visit to Iran has opened a new chapter in our bilateral relations. PM's interaction with the Iranian leadership witnessed a reiteration of a mutual desire to build on civilisational affinities and cultural commonalities, impart commercial, economic and technological depth to the relationship, pursue the continuing dialogue at official and political levels on regional and international issues.

India's move on demolition of Buddha Statues in Afghanistan

4466. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to move International Court of Justice against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for demolition of thousand years old Buddha statues in Afghanistan;

(b) whether India have written to many Heads of Government's about this Act of vandalism in Afghanistan;

(c) if so, what has been their response in this regard; and

(d) the details of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and